Justice
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Government Ensuring Online Privacy Protection

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador advises it is engaged in a comprehensive review of its online services and applications to ensure that personal information is protected at the highest level possible.

"Our government is committed to protecting privacy and personal information," said the Honourable Jerome Kennedy, Minister of Justice. "In light of an incident on August 22, 2008, with the online student-aid application process, we initiated a comprehensive review of all online services and applications to prevent occurrences of inappropriate access."

Immediately following notification of the incident with the student-aid site, the site was shut down, the problem was identified and corrected, and the site was re-established the same day.

"As opportunities to improve security are identified, immediate action will be taken," said Minister Kennedy. "As this work progresses, there may be interruptions to online services and applications as upgrades occur."

The Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) will work with departments to ensure that service interruptions are as brief as possible. As necessary, a notification will be posted on the appropriate departmental site to advise that it is not available and where possible indicate the expected time service will resume.

The policy of the OCIO, since its inception in 2005, is that all new online services and applications undergo a comprehensive security review before they are made available to users. The comprehensive review announced today will capture any inadequacies in older services and applications and others that may not meet current security standards.

"The comprehensive review of online services is a proactive and preventive initiative," assured Minister Kennedy. "The Williams Government committed to openness and accountability and pledged to protect the personal information of citizens. This review is a demonstration of our ongoing efforts to ensure that promise is fulfilled."

Other applications used internally by Provincial Government employees and approved clients are also being reviewed but will have no impact on the general public. Service interruptions regarding these applications will be communicated directly to those affected.

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